### Case 2:22-cv-00694-JRC Document 1-1 Filed 05/23/22 Page 1 of 18 EXHIBIT 1A

1 G€GGÁOEÚÜÁGÍÁEI KGGÁÚT 2 SOÞ ŐÁÔU WÞ VŸ ÙWÚÒÜQJÜÁÔUWÜVÁÔŠÒÜS 3 ÒËZ(ŠÒÖ ÔŒÙÒÁNÁGGËGËEÎ €Î Ï ËFÁÙÒŒ 4 5 6 IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON 7 IN AND FOR KING COUNTY 8 YUAN ZHANG, a married person, 9 Case No. 10 Plaintiff, 11 v. COMPLAINT FOR EMPLOYMENT **DISCRIMINATION** 12 **ENERGY** AUTHORITY, INC., corporation, 13 Defendant. 14 15 Plaintiff, Yuan Zhang ("Plaintiff" or "Ms. Zhang"), by and through her attorney of record, 16 Joseph W. Moore of Cascade Law, PLLC, commences this action against Defendant, The Energy 17 Authority ("TEA" or "Defendant"), for employment discrimination and alleges as follows: 18 I. **INTRODUCTION** 19 This is an employment discrimination case in which Defendant took adverse employment 20 actions against Plaintiff because of her sex, race/ethnicity, pregnancy, and utilization of leave 2122benefits. After subjecting Plaintiff to different treatment than other similarly-situated employees, 23Defendant fired Plaintiff, a new mother, shortly after receiving notice that Plaintiff was 24 considering taking the remaining pregnancy/maternity leave to which she was entitled. Plaintiff's 25

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- 4.7 Plaintiff's performance was satisfactory at all times during her employment.
- 4.8 TEA provided yearly performance appraisals for its employees during the time of Plaintiff's employment.
- 4.9 The appraisal rated employee performance on a scale ranging from 1 (unsatisfactory) through 5 (truly distinguished).
- 4.10 Plaintiff's appraisals for the years 2016, 2017, and 2018 indicate that Plaintiff's performance was rated higher than "unsatisfactory" and/or "1" for each of those years.
  - 4.11 In 2017, Defendant promoted Plaintiff to the position of Qualified Analyst.
- 4.12 After her promotion, Plaintiff began participating in monthly meetings with Mr. West, as did all of Mr. West's subordinates.
- 4.13 Mr. West did not allege during any of these meetings that Plaintiff's performance was falling below company standards.
- 4.14 Mr. West did not allege during any of these meetings that Plaintiff was at risk of being terminated if her performance did not improve.
- 4.15 On September 14, 2018, Plaintiff sent an email announcing her pregnancy to her team (the "September 14 email").
- 4.16 In the September 14 email, Plaintiff stated she was due to give birth in March 2019.
- 4.17 Plaintiff also indicated her plan to work "up to the delivery week, take March and April off" and "come back to work in May either part-time or full time."
  - 4.18 Plaintiff copied Mr. West and Mr. Clarke on the September 14 email.
  - 4.19 TEA provides an employee with a leave of absence for the period of time the

employee is sick or temporarily disabled because of pregnancy or childbirth.

- 4.20 Neither Mr. West nor Mr. Clarke provided Plaintiff with any information or notification about paid family medical leave or applicable TEA leave policies in response to the September 14 email.
- 4.21 Neither Ms. McCoy, nor any other TEA Human Resources employee, provided Plaintiff with any notification about paid family medical leave or TEA's applicable leave policies in response to her public pregnancy announcement.
- 4.22 Despite Plaintiff's obvious appearance indicating she was pregnant, neither Mr. West, Mr. Clarke, nor anyone from TEA'S Human Resources department informed Plaintiff of TEA's leave policies or inquired whether Plaintiff needed leave time.
- 4.23 Less than one (1) month after Plaintiff communicated news of her pregnancy, Mr. Clarke began searching for her replacement, despite Plaintiff's reassurances to Mr. Clarke and Mr. West that she was having a normal pregnancy and was still capable of performing her job duties.
- 4.24 On or about February 4, 2019, Mr. Clarke told Plaintiff that another employee (a non-pregnant female) would be taking over Plaintiff's duties.
- 4.25 When Plaintiff inquired about the reasons for this change, Mr. Clarke informed Plaintiff he thought it would be good for her.
- 4.26 Mr. Clarke did not state or otherwise indicate in any way that the change was related to Plaintiff's performance.
- 4.27 After the February 4 conversation, Plaintiff was reassigned to a different role with less responsibility.
  - 4.28 Plaintiff communicated with TEA Human Resources employees, Mr. West, and

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- 4.64 After Plaintiff told Ms. Boggs that Plaintiff had requested maternity leave, Ms. Boggs granted Plaintiff's leave request and stated she would provide Plaintiff additional weeks of health insurance.
- 4.65 Neither Plaintiff's managers nor any other individual with supervisory authority complained of or made any other such reference to Plaintiff not being a good fit for TEA until after her pregnancy.

### V. EXHAUSTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

- 5.1 Plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1.1 through 4.65 as though fully set forth herein.
- 5.2 On or about January 17, 2020, Plaintiff filed a charge of discrimination with the WSHRC and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) alleging discrimination by Defendant TEA on the basis of Plaintiff's sex, ethnicity, and Plaintiff's request to use leave under the Washington Family Leave Act ("WFLA").
  - 5.3 The EEOC issued Plaintiff a Notice of Right to Sue letter on January 28, 2002.
- 5.4 Plaintiff has timely filed this action within ninety (90) days after receiving the Notice of Right to Sue letter from the EEOC.

### VI. FOR A FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION VIOLATION OF TITLE VII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 Intentional Discrimination - Sex

- 6.1 The Plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1.1 through 5.4 as though fully set forth herein.
- 6.2 Defendant inflicted less favorable employment terms upon the Plaintiff because of the Plaintiff's sex.
- 6.3 Defendant singled out and targeted Plaintiff for enhanced workplace scrutiny and harassment.
  - Based on the plaintiff's sex, Defendant reassigned Plaintiff to a position with less

Defendant's discriminatory treatment of Plaintiff constitutes sex discrimination, disparate treatment based on sex, and less favorable terms and conditions of employment for the As a result of Defendant's knowing and willfully unlawful actions, Plaintiff has suffered damages (including but not limited to physical and mental distress, loss of income and benefits, costs and attorney's fees and other actual and punitive damages). Plaintiff seeks actual and punitive damages, costs and attorney's fees in such amounts as are just and proper as well as other relief available from this Court. FOR A SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION VIOLATION OF TITLE VII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 **Intentional Discrimination - Race** The Plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1.1 through 5.4 as though fully set forth herein. Defendant inflicted less favorable employment terms upon the Plaintiff on the For example, pregnant employees who were not Asian were permitted to take 18 Based on the plaintiff's race, Defendant reassigned Plaintiff to a position with less The Defendant terminated Plaintiff based upon the plaintiff's race. Defendant's discriminatory treatment of Plaintiff constitutes race discrimination,

plaintiff based on race, all in violation of Title VII.

- 7.8 As a result of Defendant's knowing and willfully unlawful actions, Plaintiff has suffered damages (including but not limited to physical and mental distress, loss of income and benefits, costs and attorney's fees and other actual and punitive damages).
- 7.9 Plaintiff seeks actual and punitive damages, costs and attorney's fees in such amounts as are just and proper as well as other relief available from this Court.

## VIII. FOR A THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION VIOLATION OF TITLE VII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 Intentional Discrimination – National Origin

- 8.1 The Plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1.1 through 7.9 as though fully set forth herein.
- 8.2 Plaintiff is a legal immigrant from China.
- 8.3 Plaintiff's national origin is Chinese.
- 8.4 Defendant inflicted less favorable employment terms upon the Plaintiff on the basis of Plaintiff's national origin.
- 8.5 For example, pregnant employees who were not from China were permitted to take 18 weeks of leave in 2019.
- 8.6 Based on the plaintiff's national origin, Defendant reassigned Plaintiff to a position with less responsibility.
  - 8.7 The Defendant terminated Plaintiff based upon the plaintiff's national origin.
- 8.8 Defendant's discriminatory treatment of Plaintiff constitutes discrimination on the basis of national origin, disparate treatment based on national origin, and less favorable terms and conditions of employment for the plaintiff based on her national origin, all in violation of Title VII.
  - 8.9 As a result of Defendant's knowing and willfully unlawful actions, Plaintiff has

9.13 As a result of Defendant's knowing and willfully unlawful actions, the plaintiff has suffered damages (including but not limited to physical and mental distress, loss of income and benefits, costs and attorney's fees and other actual and punitive damages).

# X. FOR A FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION VIOLATION OF TITLE VII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 Hostile Work Environment (42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.)

- 10.1 The plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1.1 through 9.13 as though fully set forth herein.
- The Defendant conducted and permitted unwelcome conduct against the Plaintiff.
- 10.3 The Defendant's unwelcome conduct was based on the Plaintiff's sex.
- 10.4 The Defendant's unwelcome conduct was severe and pervasive enough to alter the conditions of employment and to create a hostile work environment.
  - 10.5 There is a basis for imputing liability to the Defendant.
- 10.6 As a result of Defendant's knowing and willfully unlawful actions, the Plaintiff has suffered damages (including but not limited to physical and mental distress, loss of income and benefits, costs and attorney's fees and other actual and punitive damages).
- 10.7 The Plaintiff seeks actual and punitive damages, costs and attorney's fees in such amounts as are just and proper as well as other relief available from this Court.

### XI. FOR A SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION VIOLATION OF 42 U.S.C. § 1981 Hostile Work Environment

- 11.1 The plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1.1 through 10.7 as though fully set forth herein.
  - 11.2 The defendant conducted and permitted unwelcome conduct against the plaintiff.
  - 11.3 The defendant's unwelcome conduct was based on the plaintiff's race/ethnicity.
  - The defendant's unwelcome conduct was severe and pervasive enough to alter the

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the Washington Law Against Discrimination, Rev. Code Wash. 49.60.180.

13.11 As a direct result of Defendant's knowing and willfully unlawful actions, Plaintiff has suffered damages including but not limited to, lost past and future income, compensation, and benefits.

### XIV. FOR A NINTH CAUSE OF ACTION VIOLATION OF WASHINGTON FAMILY LEAVE ACT, RCW 49.78 et seq. Retaliation

- 14.1 Plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1.1 through 14.11 as though restated verbatim.
- 14.2 The Washington Family Leave Act, RCW 49.78 *et seq.*, was effective at the time of the events giving rise to Plaintiff's Complaint.
- 14.3 Defendant learned or should have learned there was a possible qualifying event making Plaintiff eligible for family leave when Plaintiff sent the Maternity Leave Email to Mr. Galke (copying Ms. McCoy).
- 14.4 Roughly one (1) month after this email, Defendant took adverse action against Plaintiff, terminating her employment.
  - 14.5 Plaintiff engaged in a protected activity under the Washington Family Leave Act.
- 14.6 There exists a causal connection between Plaintiff notifying Defendant she may need to take her remaining leave time and the Defendant's adverse action.
  - 14.7 The defendant's treatment of Plaintiff was intentional.
- 14.8 Defendant's actions including but not limited to terminating Plaintiff's employment constituted a violation of Plaintiff's rights under the WFLA, RCW 49.78.300.
- 14.9 As a result of Defendant's knowing and willfully unlawful actions, the plaintiff has suffered damages (including but not limited to physical and mental distress, loss of income and benefits, costs and attorney's fees and other actual and punitive damages).

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# XV. FOR AN ELEVENTH CAUSE OF ACTION VIOLATION OF PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION ACT Intentional Discrimination

- 15.1 Plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1.1 through 12.8 as though fully set forth herein.
- 15.2 The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, an amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, requires an employer treat pregnant employees the same as other employees-including women-who are not pregnant but otherwise similar in their ability or inability to work.
- 15.3 The Defendant made employment decisions regarding Plaintiff based on her pregnancy, a pregnancy-related condition, or prejudices of supervisors, co-workers, clients, and/or customers.
- 15.4 The status of not being pregnant is not a bona fide occupational qualification that is reasonably necessary to the normal operation of Defendant's business.
- 15.5 Defendant treated Plaintiff less favorably with regards to the terms and conditions of employment than employees who were not pregnant.
- 15.6 Such disparate treatment amounts to discrimination based on pregnancy or a pregnancy-related condition.
- 15.7 The defendant's discriminatory and disparate treatment of the plaintiff was intentional.
- 15.8 The foregoing conduct constitutes illegal, intentional discrimination prohibited by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act.
- 15.9 As a direct result of Defendant's knowing and willfully unlawful actions, Plaintiff has suffered damages including but not limited to, lost past and future income, compensation, and benefits.
  - 15.10 The Plaintiff seeks actual and punitive damages, costs and attorney's fees in such

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amounts as are just and proper as well as other relief available from this Court.

### XVI. REQUEST FOR RELIEF

- 16.1 As a proximate result of the defendant's discrimination, Plaintiff has suffered and continues to suffer losses in an amount to be proven at trial.
  - 16.2 Plaintiff prays for the following relief:
    - a. Judgment against Defendant under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, for the illegal and intentional discrimination against Plaintiff because of Plaintiff's sex, race and/or national origin;
    - b. Judgment against Defendant under 42 U.S.C. § 1981 for the illegal and intentional discrimination against Plaintiff because of Plaintiff's race or ethnicity;
    - c. Judgment against Defendant under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for subjecting Plaintiff to a hostile work environment due to Plaintiff's sex and race/ethnicity;
    - d. Judgment against Defendant under RCW 49.60 *et seq*. for the illegal and intentional discrimination against Plaintiff because of Plaintiff's sex/pregnancy;
    - e. Judgment against Defendant under RCW 49.60 *et seq.* for the illegal discrimination against Plaintiff due to her race/ethnicity
    - f. Judgment against Defendant under RCW 49.78 *et seq*. for illegal retaliation against Plaintiff for engaging in the protected activity of taking maternity/pregnancy leave under the Washington Law Against Discrimination;
    - g. Judgment against Defendant under the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for the illegal and intentional discrimination against Plaintiff due to her pregnancy;
    - h. An order restoring Plaintiff to her rightful position at TEA, or in lieu of reinstatement, an order for front pay benefits;
    - i. Back pay (including interest and benefits);
    - j. Compensatory damages for past and future non-pecuniary losses resulting from the unlawful employment practices described above, including but not

limited to emotional pain, suffering, inconvenience, mental anguish, loss of enjoyment of life, and humiliation;

- k. Punitive damages for Defendant's malicious conduct described above, in amounts to be determined at trial;
- l. Judgment against the Defendant for attorney's fees and costs as allowed by law;
- j. Prejudgment and postjudgment interest, as permitted by law; and
- k. For such other relief as the Court deems just and equitable.

DATED this 25th day of April, 2022.

CASCADE LAW, PLLC

Joseph W. Moore, WSBA No. 44061

Attorney for Plaintiff